

resting on the *outer* edge of it. Now the question arose, would the cuckoo have revisited the nest to see that her egg was safely deposited, or would the Stonechat have voluntarily or involuntarily rolled this egg into the nest?

The following points seem quite clear:—

1. The pugnacity of the Stonechats shattered the theory of the dupes being under the delusion that something in the form of a hawk was in the vicinity of their nest. This too was stressed by Livesey.

2. The Stonechats were definitely averse from the cuckoo's proximity to their nest.

3. I think curiosity, coupled with a certain amount of suspicion, impels the prospective fosterers to divulge the whereabouts of their nest, which is just what the cuckoo desires.

4. The possibility of the cuckoo, as some maintain, carrying its egg in its mouth and then depositing it in the fosterer's nest may be ruled out in this case, for had it attempted to do so its egg must surely have come to grief during the Stonechat's tornado of attacks on its head. Moreover its bill was wide open most of the time.

The above facts may be, and probably are, unusual and so I hope this note may be of interest. The Rufous Backed Shrike (*Lanius s. erythronotus*) is a common dupe of the European Cuckoo (*C. canorus*) and one cannot conceive how the cuckoo could possibly survive under a like onslaught by these comparatively strong and pugnacious birds.

The cuckoo's egg in this case was a rich salmon pink, blotched with reddish brown, unlike any I have previously taken.

SIMLA.

H. JONES.

June 10, 1936.

XIX.—THE BURMESE PLAINTIVE CUCKOO (*CACOMANTIS MERULINUS QUERULUS* HEINE).

The astonishing discrimination of the Burmese Plaintive Cuckoo, that I have referred to already in another connection,¹ offers a very subtle point for consideration against the Desertion Theory.

The Plaintive Cuckoos in the vicinity of Taunggyi lay two types of eggs commonly—the one a pale blue egg marked with red spots—and the other a pure white egg marked with red spots. The two types are about equally common. Both types victimise *Franklinia* which lays eggs here of two types—the one pale blue marked with red spots and the other white marked with red spots. Both types are about equally common.

The blue egg laying cuckoo invariably deposits its egg in the nest of the blue egg *Franklinia*—and the white egg cuckoo in the white egg *Franklinia*! *Someone has wonderful powers of discrimination.*

As there is no visible difference—as far as is known—between

¹ Cuckoo Problems, T. R. Livesey, *Journal*, vol. xxxviii, p. 734.

Franklinia laying blue eggs—or white eggs, it follows that the cuckoos watching Franklinia building their nest cannot tell what type of egg the Franklinia will lay until they lay their first egg.

A blue egg cuckoo watching a pair of Franklinia building would inspect the first egg they lay. If it was white it would seem that the cuckoo refuses it and presumably goes on elsewhere in its search for a blue egg Franklinia. And *vice versa*.

In other words the cuckoo is observing very closely the eggs of the species it dupes and then exercises a very discriminating choice. *The cuckoo chooses—not the dupe.*

The colouration of the cuckoo's egg is due to the 'initiative' of the cuckoo—to its desire to the end of mimicry—which has given the perfection of resemblance achieved over countless generations.

As regards the call of the Plaintive Cuckoo, the 'twēēt-ā-twēēt' note is uttered in the cold weather, for I have heard these cuckoos calling thus in Karenni in November and December. On the other hand, I have never heard the cadence note being called in the cold season and I take this note to be a purely breeding call.

TAUNGGYI, S. SHAN STATES,

BURMA.

T. R. LIVESEY.

July 30, 1936.

XX.—THE SMALL GREEN-BILLED MALKOHA
[*RHOPODYTES VIRIDIROSTRIS* (JERDON)].

The only instance mentioned by Baker and Inglis in *The Birds of Southern India* where this bird was found breeding was by Sir A. Cardew in the North Arcot District on the 10th March 1885.

A nest of this bird was taken by me on 23rd April 1936 near Shiyali in the Tanjore District. The nest was situated in a very thorny bush, alongside a small river and at about five feet from the ground. The bird was seated on the nest which made identification easy. The nest appeared small for the bird and consisted of a few dry twigs and dried leaves for a lining. The nest contained two eggs, partly set, chalky white in colour and in shape blunt ovals measuring 1.12 in. by 0.88 in. The surface of the eggs was scratched by the claws of the bird.

TANJORE.

C. H. BIDDULPH.

September 4, 1936.

[As to the breeding of the Small Green Billed Malkoha (*R. viridirostris*). Whistler in his Report on the Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats (*Journal*, xxxvii, 525) refers to LaPersonne's statement that he believed that these birds were breeding at Kuruinbapatti in April and in the Shevaroy Tirthamalai area in May and June. This Mr. Whistler considered late as the series of skins obtained by LaPersonne in June contained young birds in post juvenal moult. Mr. Biddulph's note helps to confirm Mr. Whistler's conclusion. During the recent ornithological survey of Travancore Mr. Humayun Abdulali found a nest of this Malkoha with two eggs on 28 April (1933) at Arāmboli, a locality adjoining the Tinnevely District of Madras.—Eds.]